

REMARKS

Claim 33 and 34 are now pending in the application. Claims 1-32 are cancelled, claim 33 is amended and new claim 34 is added. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claim 33 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Owa et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,348,971). This rejection is respectfully traversed. Notwithstanding and solely in the interest of expediting prosecution, claim 33 is amended.

Amended claim 33 calls for a distributed print management server that is connected to a plurality of printers through a network, divides print data into a plurality of print jobs and stores the print jobs. The distributed print management server: identifies one of the plurality of print jobs as one print job to be printed; provides a distributed print start notification to at least some of the plurality of printers; selects one printer from among the plurality of printers that have issued an acquisition request for the print job, the one printer being most appropriate for the one print job based on printing capabilities and status information of the plurality of printers; and assigns the one print job to the one printer by sending print data of the one print job to the one printer and sending a print wait notification to other printers of the plurality of printers.

Applicant acknowledges that Owa et al. discloses a configuration that is devised such that a printer is selected based upon printer states including basic information and

status information. However, in the claimed distributed printing system of the present application, the print data of the print job is sent to the selected printer (see step 406) and a print wait notification is sent to the other printers (non-selected printers). These features are not disclosed in any of the cited documents.

As described at page 45 line 16 – page 46 line 2 of Applicant's specification: "a distributed print request is broadcasted to all printers, the most appropriate printer is selected from among printers returning a response on the basis of information about the printing capabilities and status of the printers, and a print job is assigned to the selected printer, as described above. Thus the most appropriate printer can be selected without having to constantly monitor the capabilities and status of each individual printer. Furthermore, because not only the printing capabilities but also the status information such as the number of remaining paper sheets and ink level of the printers are used as criteria to select a printer, distributed printing jobs can be scheduled smoothly without keeping them waiting in the print queue."

Based on the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 33 is allowable over the prior art.

NEW CLAIM

New claim 34 is added. Support for this new claim can be found at least in cancelled claim 3. Applicant respectfully submits that none of the cited documents discloses that when the print job is assigned to a printer, the printer that can complete the print job in the shortest time from warm-up is selected.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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